



## Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** [PE1392](#)

**Main Petitioner:** Robert McEwan

**Subject:** City status by right of Ancient Prescriptive Usage

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make representations to the UK Government to make Scotland equal to other parts of the United Kingdom in having Ancient Prescriptive Usage accepted as a parameter for acceptance of the right for the many ancient towns of Scotland previously known as cities, to have the style and status of city restored.

### **Ancient Prescriptive Usage**

Ancient Prescriptive Usage appears not to be a term used in Scotland or found in Scots law but, in the context of city status, is understood to mean that a city has enjoyed the right to call itself a city through historic convention resulting from continued use over a long but unspecified period of time.

### **City status**

City status is a 'civic honour', granted by Her Majesty the Queen under the Royal Prerogative, acting on the advice of Ministers.

City status is now conferred by the Sovereign by Letters Patent. Three Scottish cities have received this civic honour in the past 130 years, namely: Dundee (1889), Inverness (2000) and Stirling (2002).

Nowadays, towns can gain city status through competitions which are held from time to time, usually to mark important Royal anniversaries. The latest competition, which has now closed, will mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Perth has been nominated.

Three other cities, which did not receive their status from Letters Patent, are recognised in Scotland, namely Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. As with other UK cities which did not receive their status via the Letters Patent, their city status was confirmed by local government legislation during the last 100-150 years.

It is possible, under local government re-organisation legislation, for a new local authority to lose the city status previously enjoyed by part of that authority.

## **Government Action**

Civic honours are a reserved matter and therefore the responsibility of UK Government Ministers. At present this responsibility lies with the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Council, Nick Clegg, assisted by the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, Mark Harper.

In addition, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for co-ordinating the Government's involvement in the Diamond Jubilee. Other Ministers who will be involved as appropriate include the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

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**10 June 2011**

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